III The Baghdad Railway

The Baghdad Railway which runs 247 kilometers in Syria is the principal means of transport for goods. It handles about 200,000 tons of goods every year. The bulk of Jazirah wheat is transported over it. But it has had in recent years keen competition from trucks in spite of the bad roads for several reasons. The Qamishli-Aleppo line passes for 70% of its length through Turkish territory and is under Turkish control. When the Turks choose to irritate the Syrians they restrict the entrance to the stations and in numerous other ways frustrate the Syrians and cause them hardship. Whole trains are unaccountably delayed for days in the Turkish stations.

Already passenger traffic is handled almost entirely by planes, cars and busses, except in winter months when the roads are unsafe. A bus charges LS 10 from Qamishli to Aleppo and makes the trip in 12 hours. A small car charges LS 20 and makes the trip in 8 hours. It takes the "Express" 20-22 hours to reach Aleppo from Qamishli and the fare is LS 30 in second-class "wagon lit" with tips.

For merchandise the train rate is LS 23.5 per ton from Qamishli to Aleppo. It costs the farmer an additional LS 6-12 depending on the distance to transport a ton of wheat from the field to the station. There is also an amount of about LS 4 involved in handling, all of which makes the actual rate by train about LS 35.

The truck charges LS 35 from Qamishli to Aleppo during the wheat season but it carries the wheat directly from the combine in the field to the merchant's store in Aleppo thus reducing the handling expenses to a minimum and transporting the goods in the shortest time. If the farmer is not hard pressed for money, which is rather rare, and can wait until the winter months and spring, he can transport his wheat for a rate as low as LS 10-15 per ton by truck. Inversely, the cost of tranport from Aleppo to Jazirah rises in winter and spring and decreases in summer and autumn.

Though truck transport is more advantageous in many ways than transport by train, the number of trucks available and the condition of the roads make the transport of a whole crop by trucks impossible. To achieve that, a complete road network needs to be constructed, diesel trucks would have to be imported and the discriminatory tariffs against them abolished.

have seen the incessant stream of visitors, often quite humble people, gazing at the showcases of exhibits from Mari, Ras-Shamra and Ugarit; while they are there, these visitors also go round the museum and have an opportunity of admiring its treasures. In addition, it would be very helpful if the government, which furthers the training of scientific specialists by providing fellowships for study abroad, and does so much to develop the schools, were to introduce courses on the history of Syrian art and antiquities into the curricula of Syrian secondary schools and higher educational establishments, both in Damascus and Aleppo.

Tourist development could also do much to help in the protection of historic monuments by showing the population that they can provide a steady source of income. From this point of view, Syria's art treasures have, as yet, scarcely been exploited. In the absence of suitable facilities and adequate publicity, there is still very little tourist traffic in Syria. A great deal of extremely useful work could be done in this field by an active organization, supported by the State. In order to attract foreigners to a country so rich both in natural beauties and impressive remains, it should only be necessary to improve certain sections of roads and establish one or two conveniently situated and unpretentious but well-run hotels or rest-houses, where visitors can eat and sleep in pleasant surroundings. It is astonishing that sites as fascinating as Palmyra, St. Simeon or the Krak des Chevaliers should still be so hard to reach when it would be relatively simple to organize tours either by road or air. In this respect, Greece, where the tourist trade has advanced by leaps and bounds in the space of a few years, and is now making a considerable contribution to the country's economic resources, seems to us to provide a particularly good example of what can be done in this way.

We shall have to consider town planning in greater detail